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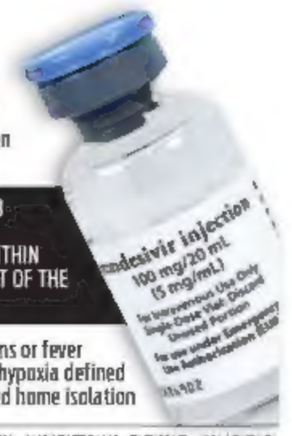
LATEST GUIDELINES ISSUED BY ICMR ON PLASMA, REMDESIVIR
1 Remdesivir can be used in patients with moderate to severe disease within 10 DAYS of symptom onset
2 Plasma can be administered in early moderate disease within seven days of symptom onset; beyond 7 DAYS
3 Remdesivir not recommended for those with severe renal impairment or hepatic dysfunction
4 Remdesivir must not to be used in patients who are not on oxygen support or in home settings
5 OFF-LABEL USE OF TOCILIZUMAB IN CASE OF SEVERE DISEASE RECOMMENDED, PREFERABLY WITHIN 24 TO 48 HOURS OF THE ONSET OF THE DISEASE OR ICU ADMISSION
6 Upper respiratory tract symptoms or fever without shortness of breath or hypoxia defined as mild disease, patients advised home isolation

Situation stays grim as states gasp

Need 1,471 tons of O_2, getting only 300: CM

State seeks 2L doses of Remdesivir; plans to add 2,000 modular makeshift ICU beds

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

UNDER pressure due to the mammoth surge in Covid-19 numbers, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Friday demanded immediate additional supply of oxygen and Remdesivir from the Union Government.

Speaking at the meeting of Chief Ministers of high-case load states, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Yediyurappa said that 500 tons of oxygen were used in Karnataka on Thursday alone and pointed out that as per estimates, the state will need 1,142 tons of oxygen from April 25.

"Going by the number of cases, Karnataka will need 1,471 tons of oxygen each day after April 30. The Union Government has allocated only 300 tons for Karnataka. If this situation continues, many healthcare centres will have to be shut down," Yediyurappa warned, urging the Centre to increase oxygen supply to Karnataka immediately. The CM's firm demand came even as Prime Minister Modi asked state governments to carry out oxygen audits to check pilferage and wastage.

Perhaps for the first time since the pandemic broke out, Karnataka has strongly urged for immediate relief from the Centre, instead of submitting its request and appealing for help at the earliest. The Union Government increased oxygen quota for various states on Thursday, but Karnataka did not figure in the list. Yediyurappa also requested for an additional two lakh doses of Remdesivir from the PM.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar said that Karnataka was looking to import Remdesivir directly from the international market, but will need the Centre's approval for the same. "In the next 15 days we will set up 2,000 makeshift modular ICU beds and 800-1,000 of them will have ventilator facility," he added.

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa interacts with PM Narendra Modi on Friday

The Union Government has allocated only 300 tons for Karnataka. If this situation continues, many healthcare centres will have to be shut down

B S Yediyurappa, Chief Minister

STATEWIDE	APRIL 22	APRIL 23
Fresh cases	25,795	26,962
Active cases	1,96,236	2,14,311
Deaths	123	190
Recoveries	5,624	8,697
Fresh cases in B'luru Urban	15,244	16,662

Covid-19 patients, some of them on stretchers, waiting for beds outside the GTB Hospital in New Delhi on Friday | PRAVEEN NEGI

CALL FOR AUDIT OF OXYGEN USE BY GUZZLER STATES

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

CAUGHT in the middle of an acute oxygen shortage caused by an unprecedented demand from hospitals, industry sources said the situation has become grim also because many states with oxygen plants are not allowing the gas to go out of their states. The Centre has mapped the requirement of all states which is being closely monitored at district level.

"All states should adhere to the Central guidelines. The Ministry of Home Affairs has instructed that there should be unhindered movement of oxygen tankers inter- and intra-state. Unfortunately, that's not the case. Some states, which have oxygen plants, are not allowing it to be supplied to other states. Strict action should be taken against such rogue states," said Saket Tiku, president of All India Industrial Gases Manufacturers' Association (AIIGM) and member of the central committee on oxygen supply.

Oxygen management is another big reason for the growing scarcity, he added. "There are states like Kerala and Maharashtra, which have very high active cases, but their oxygen management is best. Karnataka is also managing well, but there are guzzler states. The Centre should conduct a fair audit of oxygen use by all states," he added. P6

STATE COVID-19 SECOND WAVE	
15.19%	Positivity Rate
0.70%	Case Death Rate
1,77,466	Samples tested on Friday
83,80,736	Total vaccinations achieved so far

Universities and colleges in Bengaluru resume helpline channels for students

25 DEATHS IN 24 HRS IN GANGA RAM HOSPITAL

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

TWENTY-five critical patients at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, one of the biggest private hospitals in Delhi, died and the lives of another 60 were at risk on Friday, reportedly due to oxygen shortage.

While the hospital did not spell the reason for the deaths, sources said low oxygen concentration could be the reason. "Critical patients need high-pressure oxygen supply," said an official.

Early on Friday morning, the hospital had sent out an SOS saying the lives of many patients were hanging in the balance due to low stock of oxygen.

"25 sickest patients have died in last 24 hours at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital. Oxygen will last another two hours. Ventilators and Bipap (ventilators for invasive treatment) not working effectively. Resorting to manual ventilation in Intensive Care Units and Emergency. Major crisis likely. Lives of another 60 sickest patients in peril," read the statement issued by the hospital.

Following this, an oxygen tanker arrived at the hospital a little after 9 am.

Dr S Rana, chairman of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, said, "I would not ascribe the deaths due to shortage of oxygen... a large number of patients are in serious condition. However, we are facing severe oxygen shortage and are resorting to manual ventilation to ensure patients survive."

The chairman added the hospital needs timely supply of medical-grade oxygen to save patients' lives.

About 500 Covid-19 positive patients are currently admitted in the hospital and about 150 of them are on high flow oxygen support.

A grieving family member of a patient who died in Palghar hospital fire | PTI

13 COVID PATIENTS DIE IN MAHARASHTRA HOSPITAL BLAZE

Mumbai: At least 13 Covid-19 patients died after a fire broke out at the intensive care unit located on the second floor of the four-storeyed Vijay Vallabh Hospital at Virar, the extended suburb of Mumbai, on Friday. The fire started in the air-conditioning unit of the hospital's ICU due to a short circuit. There were 17 patients in the ICU at that time. The fire brigade rushed to the spot and doused the fire in five minutes. However, within that short period, 13 out of 17 patients died. Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced ₹5 lakh as financial help to the families of the deceased and ₹1 lakh to the injured

SC puts off hearing, takes dim view of criticism by senior lawyers

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

A day after terming the current Covid situation as a national health emergency while taking suo motu cognisance of it and demanding an action plan from the Centre within 24 hours, the Supreme Court on Friday abruptly wrapped up its hearing and posted the case for Tuesday.

It took a dim view of the worry of senior advocates that the SC's intervention could hamper proceedings at six high courts that were already hearing the matter and passing speaking orders.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde, who demitted office later in day, looked angry and told senior advocate Dushyant Dave, "You have imputed motives to us without reading our order. We never said a word and did not stop high courts. We had asked the Centre to go to HCs and report to them."

"We love my lords. But it was a genuine perception because my lords have done it in the past," Dave countered. Justice S Ravindra Bhat, who is part of the bench, said, "We never said a word and did not stop HCs. We asked the Centre to go to high court and report to them. What kind of perception you are talking about? Talk about these proceedings."

CONTINUED ON: P9

NATIONWIDE	APRIL 22	APRIL 23
Fresh cases	3,14,835	3,32,730
Recoveries	1,78,841	1,93,279
Deaths	2,104	2,263

West Bengal infection count is climbing too

PRANAB MONDAL @ Kolkata

WHEN horrified people looking at the humongous political rallies with mask-less supporters in West Bengal a couple of weeks ago wondered if such mobilisation was wise, the prompt reply of politicos was the state's Covid-positive count was far below that of high incidence states.

The numbers have since climbed with Bengal reporting a record daily spike of 12,876 positive cases on Friday, as compared to 4,511 on April 12. Within those 11 days, the toll went up four times from 14 on April 12 to 59 on Friday. And at least 80 large rallies were held in the state during that period.

On February 26, the day poll panel announced Bengal's election schedule, the daily positive cases in Birbhum, Nadia and West Burdwan districts were 2, 6 and 10, respectively. Almost a month later, on April 22, the three districts recorded 624, 455 and 596 fresh positive cases respectively, indicating its rapid unspooling in rural Bengal.

Two candidates have so far died of Covid-19 and others like state Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury have been hospitalised. The EC on Thursday, after a stinker from the Calcutta High Court, banned roadshows and public meetings with more than 500 people.

IAF airlifts O_2 tankers, docs

IAF deploys transport aircraft C-17, C-130J, IL-76, An-32 and Avro to airlift big, empty oxygen tankers and containers to various filling stations across the country; Chinook and Mi-17 helicopters on standby

Flies doctors and nursing staff from Kochi, Mumbai, Vizag and Bengaluru to various hospitals in Delhi

Cadila jab Virafin gets nod

Ahmedabad-based Zydus Cadila gets restricted emergency use approval from the drug regulator to use antiviral drug Virafin for the treatment of moderate Covid19 infection.

It is a single dose jab; drug will be available on the prescription of medical specialist for use in hospital/institutional setup, says company

PM: Crack down on O_2 hoarding, black marketing

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Friday urged chief ministers of the worst Covid-hit states to crack down on black marketing and hoarding of medical oxygen and key medicines for SARS-COV-2. Chairing a meeting with chief ministers of 11 states and Union Territories from where most Covid cases are reported, he asked them to facilitate seamless movement of medical oxygen.

Calling for united response to the runaway pandemic, Modi told the CMs that Air Force and Railways are being pressed into service to transport oxygen.

Modi urged states to set up a coordination committee for timely supply of oxygen to different hospitals of the state. "This committee should ensure that as soon as there is allotment of oxygen from the Centre, it can deliver oxygen as per requirement in different hospitals of the state immediately," added the PM.

NITI Aayog Member V K Paul gave a presentation in the meeting on raising medical facilities and targeted treatment of Covid patients.

The CMs were urged to make the district administrations in their respective states accountable for making available key medicines for treating Covid patients.

"India's success during the first wave of the pandemic was our united efforts and strategy. We will have to address this challenge in the same way," said the PM, assuring Centre's full support to states.

The meeting was live-streamed by Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, which drew the PM's ire. Kejriwal's office expressed regret but claimed they were not officially informed that the meeting was confidential. P9

DESPERATE TIMES

There's no help coming from 108 helpline; top officials get the feel

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

Well, it looks like even the top official of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) cannot get any 'help' from the helpline dedicated for bed allocation for Covid-19 patients.

Senior BBMP and health officials on Friday got a first-hand experience of the mess in bed allocation among Covid patients. As it turns out, there was trouble at very first step of calling the '108' helpline. And this was experienced by none other than BBMP Chief Commissioner **Gaurav Gupta**. He found this to be the biggest challenge of all, which often leads to patients and their families, relatives and friends running helter-skelter in a desperate bid to look for a bed and save a dear one's life.

Gupta was in for a rude shock when he called the 108 helpline for The New Indian Express to check. Initially, there was no response at the other end. After several attempts, the tele-caller picked up the call, only to get an earful from Gupta. "Why do you people not pick up calls?" he raged. To this, the tele-caller nonchalantly replied, "I picked it up just now".

Obviously, the tele-caller hadn't recognised the man on the other side of the line. Gupta had to reveal his identity as BBMP Chief Commissioner to get the person fall in line. He then questioned why the needy were not being catered to, to which the tele-caller said there was no such case. But when this reporter, on a parallel call, quoted instances when there was no response from the helpline, the tele-caller said he could not hear anything and blamed 'technical issues' for it. P6

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